

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q: What does this Groundfish Open Access Permitting really mean?

A: A federal “B” permit is being proposed for issue to the directed groundfish open access fishing fleet. This process may require open access fishermen to qualify for the “B” permit. A separate “C” permit is proposed to cover the incidental groundfish open access fishing fleet, which does not require any type of qualification as it is a registration process only.

Q: How do I qualify for the federal “B” permit?

A: Data analysis will be conducted according to the time periods and conditions laid out by the six alternatives that were identified at the June 2007 Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) meeting. Each of the six alternatives may have a different end result of permits issued. This means that you may qualify under one alternative but not under another. At that time the Council also selected a qualifying window period from April 1998 to September 2006; this means only groundfish landings made during this time period would be considered when determining eligibility.

Some of the factors that are typically considered include: 1) recent levels of fishery participation, 2) years of active long-term fishery participation and level of annual landings, and 3) highest year of fishery participation in terms of tonnage and/or revenue.

Q: How do I qualify for a “C” permit?

A: There is no qualification necessary to obtain a “C” permit; it is a registration process that requires annual renewal.

Q: So what is the difference between registration and permitting?

A: A permit is a type of registration process that requires an individual to meet certain conditions in order to be issued a specific type of permit. This is different from a registration process in which there are no conditions that an individual would need to meet in order to obtain one, however it requires completing paperwork.

Q: What does this mean for CA and OR Nearshore Fishery Permit holders?

A: Under all the current alternatives, the authority of the states will be recognized and the individuals that already possess a CA Nearshore Fishery Permit (NFP), CA Deeper Nearshore Fishery Permit (DNSFP), or an OR Nearshore Fishery permit will remain unchanged.

Q: Does this mean that Nearshore Fishery Permit holders will automatically be issued a federal “B” permit to land all other groundfish such as shelf and slope species?

A: NO. NFP and/or DNSFP holders will still need to qualify for the federal “B” permit. However, they will automatically qualify for a “C” permit for incidental landings of groundfish.

Q: What is the time (window) period being used to determine qualification for the “B” permit?

A: April 1998 – September 2006

Q: When and where did this issue come from?

A: The proposal for permitting and fleet reduction in this fishery has a long history of discussion with the PFMC but has been repeatedly put on the “back burner” due to other higher priorities. Identification of fishery participants is an important component of projecting annual fishery catches, bycatch impacts, and identification of vessels for on-board sampling. However, in recent years low trip limits for directed groundfish species have been necessary to maintain a year round fishery and address concerns for avoiding overfished species, reducing predictability in the open access component. Variability in the number of participants in the groundfish open access fishery contributes to difficulties in predicting effort when developing management measures and subsequently, in accurately predicting bycatch estimates of overfished species. By providing staffing needs, CDFG has been able to assist the Council process to address this issue at this time.

Q: Why are the nearshore species not included in this process or the data analysis?

A: The reason that nearshore species will not be covered by this federal permit is because nearshore species are currently managed by CA and OR under state-issued permits and catch limits that are more restrictive than the federal limits. So in order to avoid duplicate permits for these species, the federal “B” permit is proposed to exclude nearshore species with the understanding that the states will continue to manage nearshore species.

Q: What does this mean if I have a NFP and/or a DNSFP but I also fish for sablefish and other shelf and slope species?

A: This means that you will still be able to land the nearshore species covered by the state permit you hold under the appropriate trip limits; and will also be part of the qualifying analysis based on your landing history for all other federally designated groundfish such as sablefish and shelf and slope rockfish. If you qualify (based on the alternative adopted) you would be issued a federal "B" permit to land all federally designated groundfish within B permit allocations in addition to the nearshore species.

Q: What does this mean if I do not have a NFP and/or DNSFP but I fish for sablefish and shelf and slope species?

A: This means that you will be part of the qualifying analysis based on your landing history for all other federally designated groundfish such as sablefish and shelf and slope rockfish. If you qualify (based on the alternative adopted) you will be eligible for a federal "B" permit to land all federally designated groundfish except nearshore species.

Q: So what happens if I have a NFP and/or DNSFP but I do not qualify for the federal "B" permit? Does that mean that I will not be able to land lingcod that I normally catch while fishing for nearshore species?

A: If you are a NFP and/or DSNFP holder but do not qualify for the federal "B" permit, you will not be able to land lingcod or any other groundfish under the catch limits set by the NMFS for "B" permit holders. You will however be eligible to obtain a "C" permit in which there will be no qualification requirement, only a simple registration process. In addition, the Council is considering allowing state permitted nearshore fishermen to use their nearshore permit in lieu of obtaining the federal "C" permit. The "C" catch limits are expected to be lower than the "B" permit limits and will be incidental to fishing for other state or federal managed species.

Q: What happens if the only permit I have is for salmon and crab? What options do I have to fish for federal groundfish?

A: If you have participated in sablefish, or any other open access groundfish fishing, those landings will be included in the qualifying analysis for the "B" permit. If you do not qualify for a B permit, you will be allowed to obtain a "C" permit.

Q: How will this Groundfish Open Access Permitting process work with the Open Access Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) Process?

A: NMFS is expecting VMS to be required on all open access vessels by the end of 2007. This would mean that any vessel fishing for federally designated groundfish would be required to have the appropriate equipment on board while in federal waters. The federal "B" permit would not be required until the 2009 fishing year.

Q: Does this mean that if I qualify for a "B" permit but I stay in state waters that I will not need the VMS equipment?

A: Correct, the VMS equipment is required only while fishing in federal waters only.

Q: What if I do not agree with the alternatives that are currently listed?

A: Public comment is always encouraged at the PFMC meetings. There are several ways to be involved. You can write a written statement, or attend and speak in person at the meetings. For more information please see the information on the PFMC website at:

<http://www.pcouncil.org/operations/involved.html>

Q: When will this issue be addressed next?

A: At the November 2007 PFMC meeting in San Diego, CA the council will confirm the list of alternatives for final analysis and select preferred alternatives for public review. For more information please see the PFMC website at:

http://www.pcouncil.org/nepa/nepadocs/OA_Limitation.html
